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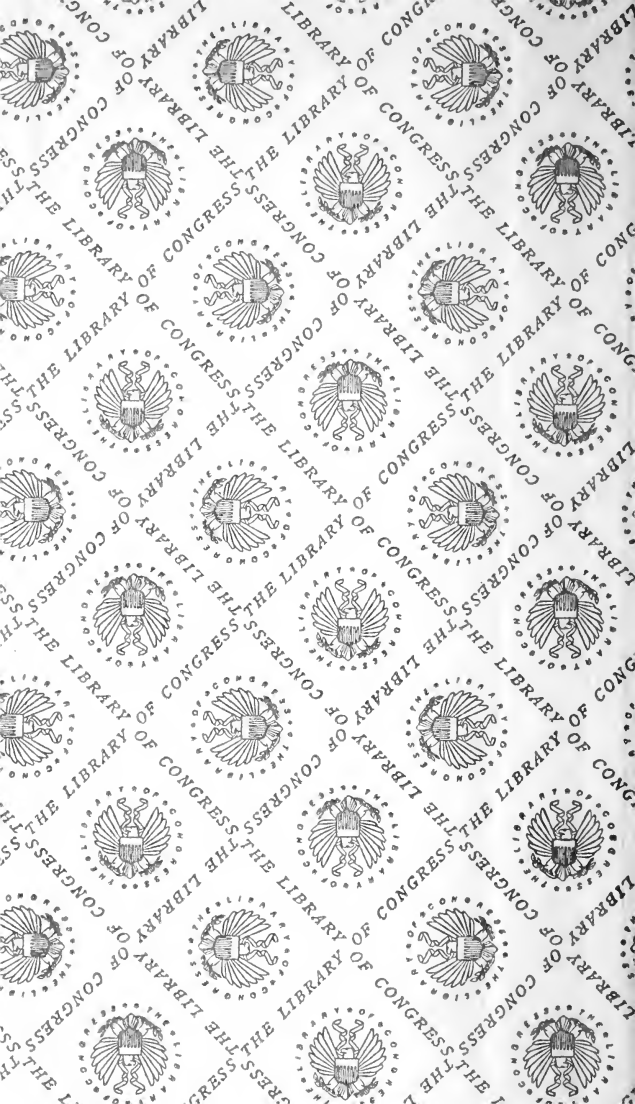
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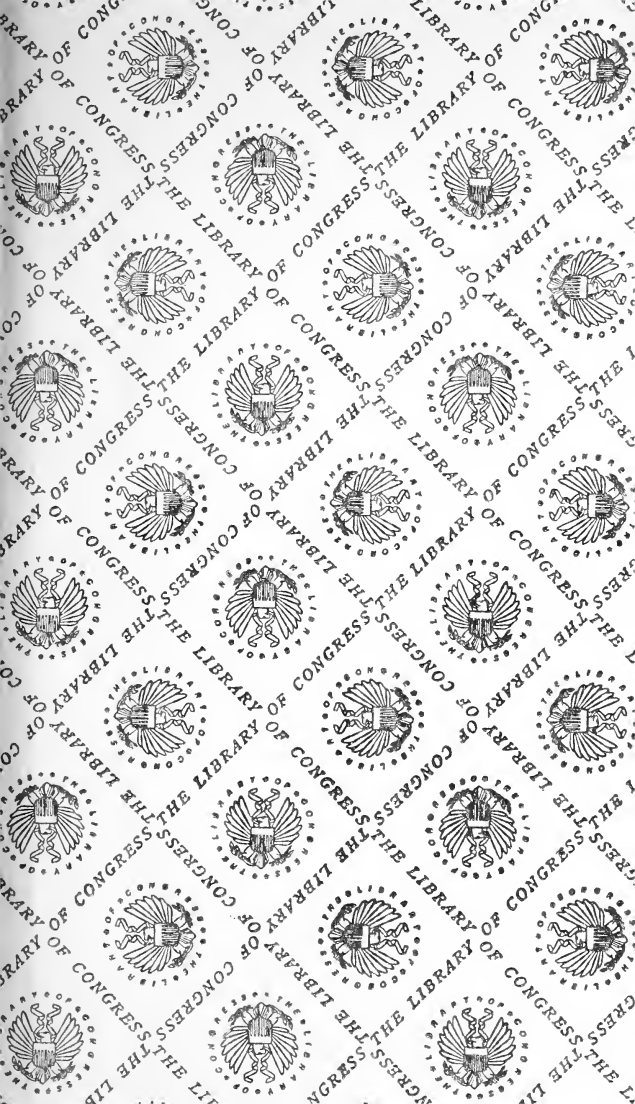
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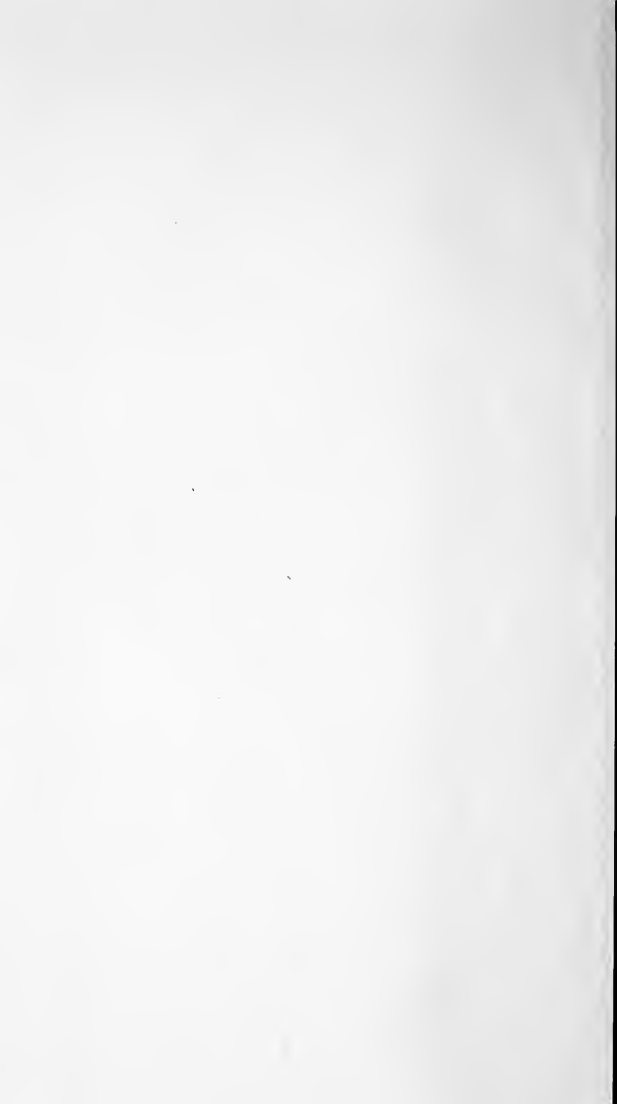
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## THE RED LAUGH





# THE RED LAUGH

*By*

GERVÉ BARONTI  
"

*pseud.*



THE CORNHILL COMPANY  
BOSTON

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*To my enemies and all others who love me.*



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## THE RED LAUGH





# THE RED LAUGH

## THE RED LAUGH

Arch fiend of all dark worlds that be,  
Whose poisoned breath blows scorching o'er  
Fair lands of late prosperity—  
Deep irrigated now with gore,

You call our strong, who hear the cry,  
And join your wretched, bloody play.  
A grimy rag you wave on high  
And madly lead them on the way.

Their hearts are closed, their reason gone,  
Through reddened mist they cannot see;  
They groping, stumble wildly on  
Engaged in vile absurdity.

You call the game, each takes his stand,  
The prizes differ with your mood.  
Some draw a leg, an arm, a hand  
Of modeled wax or clever wood.

Move follows move, one side must flee,  
With blood-drunk lust its losses tell;  
Your mocking laugh is raised in glee,  
The sound reverberates in hell!

## THE QUESTION

The beasts are tramping o'er the World  
The maddened hordes by Mammon led —  
While from the North's snow-locked embrace  
Reach frozen fingers begging bread —  
Where art Thou, God?

The vine once trailed in Southern lands  
Above the graves of peaceful dead;  
But o'er it now, through crimson rain  
Stalk blood-crazed beasts that must be fed —  
Where art Thou, God?

The eye that gazed on home-strewn plains,  
Where progress with echoing tread  
Marched proudly, holding Faith's white hand —  
Now sees her halt, to weep instead —  
Where art Thou, God?

We can forgive this bloody game  
Played from the battlements of wrong  
If the sad hosts that follow us  
Hear clear the answer to our song —  
Where art Thou, God?

## THE INSTITUTION

I sit here  
In the great palm-trimmed room.  
At one end a fireplace  
Extends yellow and blue shoots  
To the darkness of the chimney.  
From the windows I can see  
How a landscape artist  
Has exposed his genius  
For the Institution.  
I eat good food  
And dress warmly.  
My bed is a dainty white affair  
Softly patted by women.  
I read books and play games.  
I could walk beyond the grounds —  
But I must keep my poise.  
Outside the Great Powers are busy,  
Great Statesmen who occupy  
The seats of the Mighty.  
Great Men in long black robes  
Who stand on platforms  
Gazing at open books.  
Great Men who are sweetly inconsistent,  
For they call a place of kindred spirits, hell.  
The Great Powers are busy, very busy,  
Busy conscripting conscience,  
Busy conscripting souls.

Never since this dirt-ball  
Amalgamated all its particles  
Has life upon it been so busy,  
Or so beautifully ordered.

I sit here reading  
In the great palm-trimmed room.  
The world rushes by outside  
Bent upon its important work.  
The voices of the Great Powers  
Reach the Institution  
Only as a distant hubbub,  
For we here, are "insane"  
Thank God.

## CHAINS — — —

The metallic dirge  
Strikes on the ear of night  
Soul-paralyzing!  
Dreaded, mysterious, demon-wrought!  
Clank clank clank  
Rattle rattle rattle  
It slides and slips  
Thump thump thump  
The accompaniment of the iron ball,  
The hell-forged iron ball,  
Clank clank clank  
On goes the weird air,  
Rattle rattle rattle —  
Pause drag drag — —  
Drag fainter, fainter —  
Rattle rattle rattle  
Pause.  
Hollow monotonous —  
Dying away, away —  
Fainter fainter  
Drag, pause  
Ceasing.  
Rattle again, rattle — rattle  
Clank clank  
Drag  
Rattle —  
Pause —

Rattle —  
Throughout the night.

It will cease with the dawn —  
The clanking —  
The dragging —  
The chainy death rattle —  
The metallic death rattle —  
For it is a dirge of the night,  
The night that is long.

Dawn will bring peace, rest, liberation —  
But the dawn is not yet —  
Not yet —

## DAWN

I sought the sand path  
That outlines the River.  
Fate stood beside me,  
Fate, cold as intellect  
That puts out the fire  
Of emotion  
And shivers, — stagnated.  
Together we listened while  
The pale night  
Sobbed itself to sleep.  
Then Fate said:  
What do you seek here?  
Peace, I replied.  
Then Fate said:  
Do not seek Peace in the night  
She will elude you.  
Wait; and she will tarry with you  
In the coming dawn.

## RUSSIA

A dark red rose against the snow  
With petals opening to the dawn;

    A green stalk  
Breaking Repression's soil,  
The soil that fed its seed —  
    Rebellion.

    A fragrance —  
    Disillusionment —  
Wafting over many lands.



When the world is rid of foolish creeds  
And the way is lit by Truth's bright flame  
And naught fair Progress' feet impedes —  
Then *Brotherhood* is more than name.

## WORSHIPERS

Stone upon stone  
Forms the edifice.  
Imprisoned here and there  
Between the stones  
Are patches of color.

Fools! You can't catch the soul-stuff  
Of the red, green and violet  
That glowed at you first  
Across the dull nothingness.

Inside the edifice  
The husks are waiting.  
The husks with the dead interiors,  
Waiting for the one husk  
That is placed before a ribbed object  
To evoke its turbulent life  
And disturb the calm.

What sounds does it hold,  
The ribbed object  
Under its bone-dry ribs?  
Does it hold a sound of joy,  
Of love, of mirth, of pity, of fury,  
Of anything that is outside the edifice?  
Does it hold the sound  
Of the flowers bursting into life?

Does it hold the sound  
Of the trees rocking the birds to sleep?  
Does it hold the sound  
Of the forest king's warning to all lesser life?  
Does it hold the sound  
Of the winter ocean striking the wall of the  
ice-berg?

Does it hold any sound that is real,  
Any sound that is a natural sound?  
Does it hold one note of truth?  
No:—Truth is outside the edifice —  
Where the husks should be!

One husk is standing.  
Facing the others  
With its arms extended.  
Listen: with its mechanical voice  
It is consecrating all the other husks  
To God.

## HOW I LOVE — —

The wild deep-furrowed face of nature  
When her expression is tempestuous and severe,  
The wind blowing in high places,  
The mad in-rushing dash of the sea  
When it leaps fiercely to embrace the shore,  
The cold salty spray that strikes my face like a  
    whip,

The startled scream of the wild birds,  
The snarling growl of the animals — my brothers,  
The hot white heat of the noon sun,  
The dark jewelled sky of midnight,  
The free, defiant laughing cataract,  
The great first places that man has not spoiled,  
The fresh-scented earth upturned by the plough,  
The oozy, slimy mud in the bed of the brook,  
The crawling, squirming creatures who inhabit it.

The City at night when every one is sleeping,  
The pæan of the rain outside my window,  
The men who dare to be honest with women,  
The men with the gift of silence,  
All who have learned the great lesson of tolerance,  
Virtue that carries no placard,  
Vice that is stalwart, courageous, and ambitious, —  
All these I love.  
And I hate —  
The coward who links arms with regret,

The weakling who leans on atonement,  
The weak-kneed charity of the ultra-respectable,  
The sterilized vice of the hypocrite,  
All who obey too easily.

## TO THE IDEALIST

Oh, You who peace and love extol,  
Know you the complex wilful soul!

The fight to make red hate expire,  
The wish to throttle mean desire,  
The greed that comes from love of wealth,  
The chase of pleasures marring health,  
The lust that oft desires to kill,  
The leash too weak to rein in will,  
The voice that heralds others' shame,  
The trick to tarnish a fair name,  
The days that haply take the best,  
The nights that laugh at day's behest,  
The hours when life seems fashioned good,  
The moments jeering at this mood,  
The hope that when these storms are past  
The clear white light will shine at last!

## THE COWARD

I cannot follow where you lead,  
O man of science deep;  
At your cold feast I dare not feed,  
Because I wish to keep  
The thought of God.

I cannot list your pregnant speech,  
Your arguments profound,  
The proven facts you hope to teach,  
For to my soul is bound  
The fear of God.

I cannot glimpse your written page  
So radical and bold,  
These arts you've used in every age;  
Still in my heart I hold  
The love of God.

## ECHOES

I see a field of golden rye  
As the red sun forsakes the sky.  
The fruited heads upon their stem  
Nod as the wind blows over them.

Southward, and to the right is seen,  
Beyond that stretch of waving green,  
The empty house of ancient style,  
Of mouldering brick and rain-washed tile.

Beneath its vines of rank decay,  
Its rust-gnawn shutters fall away.  
Old house, I worship you again.  
You were my haunted castle — then.

Inside, but not for children's sight,  
The fairy queen once came at night.  
She brought with her a merry band  
Of all good fairies in the land.  
Throughout the night they'd dance and sing  
To instrument like violin.  
To bed we'd go to wake at dawn  
And watch them leave in early morn.  
But strange, they always stole away  
And never came to dance by day.



This olive shade I cannot pass,  
'Twas here I loitered in the grass  
And gazed intently at the blue  
And wondered long if God were true,  
And if one angel from the crowd  
Might fly quite low beneath a cloud.

Yon crescent-shapéd, lazy sea,  
To think of all you meant to me!  
Far down beneath your depths so green  
The mermaids' crystal home was seen.  
In cradle shells all pearly lined  
The lovely mermaid babes reclined.  
If one could dive down very deep,  
Into the palace he might creep.  
At night the sea would gently moan  
With echoes from that hidden home,  
And on the beach the goat-bells toll,  
Timed with the fisher's barcarolle.

And now I gaze familiarly  
On this fair land and placid sea,  
Whose beauty is enhanced; and yet,  
Somehow I see them with regret.

## WAITING —

I saw you in that Temple old  
    Lead priestly train with slow advance,  
Your hands outstretched to Merodach.  
    I dared not raise to you a glance.

When in the greatest Pharaoh's troops  
    I saw your mystic face again  
You laid a siege — but to my heart —  
    And took me willing captive then.

I still recall the buried day  
    With memory I've carried o'er,  
Our home beneath the desert palm,  
    Our life upon the Theban shore.

While Athens with the laurel crown  
    Paid homage to her mighty men,  
You watched with weary, sated mien  
    Your happy dancing slave-girl then.

With the masonic Socrates,  
    If virtue be but Knowledge true  
You did discuss; and failed to see  
    The burning flame that leaped to you.

Across the Pincian Hills you gazed,  
As the immortal city passed  
With mournful dirge. Your vision cleared  
And saw your soul revealed, at last.

To the cathedral's lofty walls  
Your shaded pane, with note of rest,  
Came to admit the only light,  
The Christ-child at his mother's breast.

Adown the aisle the other day  
I saw your black-robed form advance  
With eyes downcast and folded hands,  
I dared not raise to you a glance —

## ORCHIDS

On an amber couch near a star-dust shore  
A nymph of the night reclines.  
She is frail as the kiss of waning love  
For only the pale moon shines,

On that fairy isle in an opal sea  
Where dreams take their wings for flight,  
To carry a message to earth-tired souls  
Thru the purple veil of night.

The nymph of the night on the amber couch  
Has fashioned with delicate grace,  
A beautiful gift for our waking hours  
Of the god's rare mauve and lace,

And perfume the pale moon-beams distill  
Into petals cupped to hold, —  
And just the tiniest, tiniest pinch  
From a casket of powdered gold.

The gift is borne on the wings of a dream  
And left in some green bower  
With the name that the nymph has given it —  
The lavender orchid flower.

## OFF THE BEATEN PATH

I see an old forest of spruces  
With pathways that wind to the west  
And mantle of silence that's heavy  
With secrets it's never confessed.

The long branches entwine and lace there  
In shady green tunnels that run  
To shining expanse of gold beach-sand  
Where streamers reach down from the sun.

Thru arching green roofs of the tunnels  
Bright patches of blue show above,  
Against which spruce needles are etching  
Designs that the forest-folk love.

The floors of the tunnels are covered  
With carpets the spruces have thrown  
And borders of dwarf-growth, and rock-strewn,  
With soft moss and lichen o'ergrown.

Long slender brooks murmur and gurgle  
With every new ripple, a note  
Like low moon-light chant of the wood-nymphs  
Crooned softly from some fairy boat.

White foam floats along on their surface  
Caught by eddies' dance in a whirl  
Where furled leaves from bushes have fallen,  
And wet by the brooks, they unfurl.

Beside dark pools green-filmed and stagnant  
The spotted snake coils undisturbed,  
For in this old forest, enchanted  
Life reigns unmolested, uncurbed.

The fern-prisoned bushes have gathered  
Into clumps, low-tangled, that mark  
The homes of the silent, furred creatures  
Whose eyes are green fire thru the dark.

In op'ning where sunlight is playing  
Or seeking a cool bed to rest,  
The brown ants have gathered in numbers  
And builded themselves there, a nest.

Above, soar bright birds of all colors;  
You will know by wings' lazy flap  
And indolent manner of watching  
They've never known rifle nor trap.

Where forest has fastened and held close  
Stray ribbons the warm sunshine flings,  
You will see brilliant dashes of color  
And the glint of gold butterfly wings.

A breeze hurries thru in the evening  
Lamenting in sad monotone —  
With dirge of some weird, plaintive measure  
That's known to the forest alone.

When darkness halts near to the border  
Of the wood, and drives light away,  
The forest-folk meet and hold council,  
For night's much the same as the day.

## TO P. R. D.

The velvet beds where brooks may sleep  
Of soft moss-cushioned green  
Leaf-shadowed by caressing trees  
Where light streaks in between —  
The shower of golden sunbeams  
Transfiguring the earth  
From rosy-petaled evening clouds  
Where tiny stars have birth —  
The veil which Hypnos flings about  
To dusk the poppy night  
The twilight's purple mystery  
Before the moon sheds light —  
All speak to me of you!



## THREE AMULETS

And a tale is told by the desert men  
Of a certain Sheik who came once again,  
    With luminous eyes and bold,  
How he brought the gift, one amulet more,  
And away to his desert home he bore  
    The creature of white and gold.

She sat gazing out on the burning sand,  
And dreamed of a Sheik in that pagan land,  
    Who'd call at the edge of night,  
With his final gift, an amulet rare,  
And ask for the maid with the sunny hair  
    Whom he meant to purchase right.

Two gifts he had left with never a word  
And if she accepted — then with the third  
    He would claim the maiden's hand;  
And bear her away to his tribal place  
As chief of his wives for a certain space  
    In that languid, sun-washed land.

The tale is as old as the desert clan:  
How the wooing is done by the Arab man  
    When he offers gifts, just three,  
In silence: and then with a haughty mien  
He later returns to take his queen  
    With the tribe formality.

She looked at the amulets — Horus' eyes,  
And she thought of her child's brief paradise  
    With those other eyes of fire.  
She thought of her home, of her early life,  
The struggles and cares and maddening strife,  
    And then of her heart's desire —

She thought of that step with compelling fate  
Just off to the left of the path that's straight,  
    Taken blindly long ago.  
Life's flame had smouldered and flickered since  
    then  
With each futile attempt to place again  
    New hopes on its fading glow.

And she thought of a home beyond the sea  
Far from the expressions of sympathy  
    That accused, while proff'ring cheer.  
For friends who would welcome, and never know  
That an aching soul was transplanted to grow  
    Away from a constant fear.

The shadows were length'ning along the sand  
That prelude the night in that mystic land,  
    The west was a crimson flame —  
When out of the twilight as twice before  
In dusty haste to her flower-trimmed door  
    A lone Arab rider came.

\* \* \*

And the tale is told by the desert men  
Of a certain Sheik who came once again,  
    With luminous eyes and bold,  
How he brought the gift, one amulet more,  
And away to his desert home he bore  
    The creature of white and gold.

## VICTA

Your arm curved like the young crescent moon  
Thrills my neck. Your arm faintly amber  
Like the young moon in the low sapphire sky  
Of budding night.

I turn my head and see

Two points of steel-blue flame — your eyes.

They have borrowed the light from desire-born  
                  suns,

From old moons of blazing splendor,

Moons that looked on lawless loves, and wine-dark  
                  revels

When the world was young.

They have borrowed the full tide of cosmic pain,

The white veiled, nebulous fire,

The heat-drenched passion

From the heart of a star.

They have borrowed all — all — all.

The world has paused to dream.

Long curling waves caress a beach — somewhere:

Waves steel-blue — foam-trimmed.

The fragrance of many flowers

Unites

And pours over me.

The gentle fingers of the rain tap at the casement

A deathless melody —

A low dirge for the death of the god,

The god who blesses you, in passing.

\* \* \*

A faint breeze rustles the curtain.

Departing light checkers the wall.

The world moves on again,

Exultant.

## TRIAD

Oh send me Pain, if it must be  
On torture's scroll my eyes shall see  
    The story written there.  
My troubled soul still striving gropes  
Its way through darkness — seeking Hope's  
    Answer to the prayer.

Oh send me Love — if pain it be,  
If heartache and uncertainty  
    Are fuel for the fire.  
Oh drain my life — 'tis not in vain  
If joy but faintly tinge the pain  
    When this is Love's desire.

Oh send me Death that I may see  
The beauty in the mystery  
    When beaten hope has fled.  
For only light from flame divine  
Can feed this famished soul of mine  
    When fire-bred love lies dead.

## BEFORE A NUDE

Rare skill hath drawn o'er hidden fires,  
And made this wondrous form to glow.  
So deftly clothed, it peace inspires.  
Yes, nude thou art, but naked — no!

## PASSION FLOWERS

Sweet passion flowers at my feet in the grass,  
By the amorous south wind fanned,  
Your fragrance is wafted to me as I pass,  
Why take you to die in my hand?

Fair earth-stars designed by a Hand which is sure,  
You beckon; are we to contemn?  
Your roots are concealed—more the colors allure.  
Sweet blossoms — just die on the stem!



## A BEAR FACT

*Suggested by Georges Musaphia's Painting of Nude and Bear*

On a planet of topaz and crystal,  
Where ice-elves and fairies abound,  
Where suns' rays are filtered through gossamer,  
The girl of my dreams I have found.

She bewilders, entices and beckons,  
I watch her enraptured, soul-freed,  
While the amber light's gentle caresses  
Race round her soft limbs and recede.

The ambrosial hills' matchless beauty  
Brushed o'er by her flame-colored hair,  
Is a feast for the gods' delectation,  
And only enjoyed by a *bear*.

## TO NATALIE

Sweet maiden with the long deep eyes,  
How came you with us now?  
We see those eyes in Nephthys' face  
Below the narrow brow.

## DREAM ISLES

They are not found near coral reefs,  
Nor in far polar seas,  
Those magic isles the spirit knows,  
Those isles the spirit sees.

No chart can show the waking eye,  
Nor to the mind unfold  
Where dark green waters gently lave  
Those shores of gleaming gold.

No wandering breeze can bring to us  
The brilliant bird's soft note,  
That, to the spectre of a palm,  
Breathes from its mellow throat.

## BROWN EYES

Sweet eyes of brown,  
Dear eyes that saw the temple built  
And watched the pyramids arise  
*Were just such eyes.*

Sweet eyes of brown,  
Blest eyes that from the manger gazed,  
With ardent fire of high emprise,  
*Were just such eyes.*

Sweet eyes of brown,  
Faith's eyes that knew the marble cold  
Could glow with life so magic-wise,  
*Were just such eyes.*

Sweet eyes of brown,  
Hope's eyes that looked while canvas dim  
Took color for our late surprise,  
*Were just such eyes.*

Sweet eyes of brown,  
Love's eyes the soul is leaning through  
To catch the light as mine replies,  
*Are just such eyes.*

## THE YELLOW ROOM

I stand here alone  
Beneath her window.  
The wind scarcely breathes.  
The youthful spring sky  
Seems expressionless.  
Oh, for something to match my suffering!

I followed Death  
Into the yellow room.  
I was too late.

How this Spring landscape tortures,  
Serene and immature,  
As an unfolded bud.

Oh, that yellow room!  
Pale jonquil-studded horror!  
Pale yellow everywhere;  
The walls, the floor, the hangings,  
The window-panes  
That caught the reflection  
Of the distant sun;  
The high draped bed  
That held the body, —  
Once the restless vehicle  
Of her will.

And I followed Death  
Into the yellow room,  
But I was too late.

Oh, why did she not wait!  
I would have told her  
Another way.  
Oh why, why, why  
Did she not wait!  
Poor pale yellow soul.  
Oh why did she not wait!  
I would have told her  
Another way.

## GOOD-BYE, SWEET CHILD

The jonquil gave her golden glint  
To gild your silken hair,  
The purple iris, for your eyes  
Bequeathed her color rare,  
The lily on your velvet cheek  
Her petal white uncurled,  
Sweet flow'r, you were too fair to bloom  
In the garden of the world.

## PETALS

We crush the petals in our hands,  
Those of the vivid hue,  
For fields are green, and life is young,  
Behold, the sky is blue!

The petals flutter from our hands,  
So brown and sere they fall;  
For fields are bare and sky o'ercast.  
Just withered petals, — all.



## THE SEARCHER

The old man knelt on the sand  
Before a pile of debris  
At which he clawed with wasted fingers.  
He was bent with the sorrows of many winters.  
On his wrists were the marks  
Left by the old manacles.  
But in his eyes shone the light of emancipation.  
He was very old — this searcher.  
Diligently and faithfully,  
He removed piece after piece,  
From the pile of debris.  
He examined each piece  
Before tossing it aside.

When the last piece  
Had been removed from the pile,  
His eager eyes sought the sand beneath  
Which he pushed restlessly from side to side.  
Then taking into his hands  
Portions of the sand,  
He watched it slip through his fingers,  
And return to the pile.

Long hours he kept to his task,  
For he knew that he would find them—  
The gems he sought.

Others had passed the pile of debris,  
And had kicked it gently, very gently,  
With the slight force  
That does not loosen —  
They had not stooped to examine,  
For into their eyes had not yet come  
The light of emancipation.  
From their hands had not yet fallen  
The manacles.  
The old searcher thought of the others,  
As he watched the sand  
Slip through his fingers.  
And he laughed sadly;  
And the sound was like the wind  
Blowing through hollow caves.

The twilight was creeping up behind him  
Slowly; with noiseless tread,  
Soon it would be too dark  
To search in the sand.

Then presently he felt the rough edges  
Of that which he sought,  
And knew it was a jewel.  
There must be other jewels,  
But it was now very dark,  
And he must wait for the light  
Of another day.

Slowly and stiffly he rose  
From his kneeling posture.  
He glanced at the pieces of debris  
Which he had thrown to one side  
As he uncovered the sand beneath  
Where the treasure was hidden.

The others would pass in the morning,  
Would they see — dared he hope?  
If only they would see — the others.  
But into their eyes  
Had not yet come  
The light of emancipation.  
From their hands had not yet fallen  
The manacles.

He laughed again,  
That old hollow, broken laugh.  
A laugh that was the wailing echo  
Of all the misery in the world —  
A laugh far sadder than any tears —  
Tears might fall later — perhaps  
The bruised pearls of a benediction.  
Darkness was all about him.  
He turned and walked away  
From the scattered debris  
That made ghostly pictures  
In the gathering shadows.  
On he walked, thinking always of the others.

On past the old swamp  
Where grew the beautiful purple lilies,  
That carried their roots far down  
Into the dark, damp earth.

## TO A. C. S.

Oh thine eyes that saw the beauties,  
In the regions, where the soul,  
Flashing through the nights of darkness  
Found the daybreak of the whole!

Oh thine ears so loved by nature,  
That her poignant hands did seek,  
Soft to brush with magic fingers,  
Till they heard the flowers speak.

Oh thy lips that meekly opened  
For thy hidden song to flee  
And enrich the world forever,  
As it voiced the Christ in thee!

## MORNING SONG

Stretched 'neath a tree on thy moss-trimmed  
    mantle,  
Watching the sun come out of the sea,  
Feeling thy deep heart beneath mine throbbing,  
    Mother, I come to thee.

Listening the leaves' low gentle humming  
Attuned to the wind's rare melody  
Taken from over the mystic border —  
    Mother, to sing to thee.

Violet, yellow, and crimson blossoms  
Have massed themselves in thy soft green hair;  
And dew has emptied her jewel casket —  
    Mother, oh thou art fair!

THE PLAY

First Shade — Are you going in to see the play?

Second Shade — Yes, wait while I check my soul.

First Shade — I will keep mine.

Second Shade — You won't need it.

First Shade — Do you know the playwright?

Second Shade — Yes, he is late of the earth.

First Shade — What is the piece, comedy or  
tragedy?

Second Shade — Travesty.

First Shade — And he calls it —

Second Shade — Love.

## THE CALL

The helpless are calling to me.  
Their voices are raised in despair.  
Their hands are extended in anguish.  
I must pass on.

The hopeful are singing to me.  
Their voices are raised in gladness.  
Their hands are extended in blessings.  
I *can* pass on.

I hear the call of the helpless.  
O God, allow me to linger!



## THE STORM

'Tis storm and tempest within the deep.  
The raging seas beat a fiercely rhythmic and  
throated music.  
No moment's calm assuages their torrential to-  
and-fro.  
Across uncharted space roll laboring waters keep-  
ing time with wandering winds.  
Their pilot is a fleet of waves shaped like a mighty  
myriad-branched tree stretched on the  
face of the deep.  
As the pilot hews onward through the rocking  
breakers  
Vapors from rebellious waters mount the silence-  
pinnacled firmament and challenge the  
languid loneliness of space.  
Then as they rise higher some are choked by  
frigid currents.  
In panicky fright the clouds retreat on a long  
swift incline,  
"Led by the enskied jewels of the night,  
The galaxy of moon and stars."  
When a vanguard of clouds rejoin their rightful  
element,  
The happy waters dance in the light of the skies.  
Adown the cataract of the air the rear-guard  
hurries in might-restrained chase,  
For the enlivening communion of sea and cloud.

The fruit of their union is turbulent unrest,  
The thrill of which each passes to the other,  
Until the branches of the piloting tree moan with  
                  rebellion against the even tenor of their  
                  movement.

Each spire of cloud and wave of water  
Communicates to the other the meaning of that  
                  unrest, which from itself it withholds.

And now the mighty heart of the earth vibrates  
And the dark depths convulse with the terror of  
                  the Arch-destroyer.

“We will shake and break the earth and sky-  
                  barriers

That God has imposed on us  
When in a moment of forgetfulness  
We winked away our vigil.”

So shouted the outlying waters;  
And in a shrill tone the branches of the moving  
                  tree whistled an answer.

“We will break the barriers which Man, the  
                  haughty, earthly-heavenly child, has  
                  been allowed to fashion.

He has spanned us in a bondage of bridges,  
And now in his unsated pride  
He plans to draw from us each atom of energy  
As he has drawn from his Mother Earth.”

With one huge effort,  
Echoing through the frame of the universe,

The trunk of the tree forced the unruly branches  
to be silent

And to smite into silence the grumbling voices,  
And the sea was covered with foam caused by the  
haste of the vanquished.

Then through vast space was audible a majestic  
voice:

\* \* \*

Man is heart of my heart and life of my life.

He has assisted the melting of my sculptured  
icebergs,

My own architected pyramids.

He has changed the course of my rivers.

He has made the earth to articulate with seething  
life and triumphant labor,

The earth, that branch, which in a cosmic catas-  
trophe was torn from my body.

It is I who urge him now to bridle the seas,

To harness the winds,

To scale space,

To reclaim my lost planets.

He lives for me, and I live in him.

## A VOODOO TALE

I awake in the night.  
Startled by someone leaving my tent;  
Someone who has just drawn a hard black hand  
Across my chest;  
To cast over me a spell  
And make me conform to her wishes.  
I wear a watch on my wrist;  
The watch which belongs to the black woman.  
Beseechingly, imploringly,  
She asked me to wear it.  
Into her eyes that day  
Crept the stare which the serpent  
Fastens on the bird.  
I, like the bird, knew there was no escape.  
I extended my arm,  
Brown from the hot sun,  
Tan-whipped by the wind;  
An arm little lighter now  
Than the arm of the black woman.  
Slowly, weirdly, she uttered something  
With her snake eyes fixed on the sky,  
And slipped the watch down  
Over my fingers.  
It is a delicate thing,  
Fashioned for vanity.  
A child might remove it,  
But I cannot.

The eyes of the black woman  
Seek my wrist always.  
If the watch should be missing —  
She cooks my food  
Daintily, almost lovingly;  
Using much time  
In its preparation —  
A few grains of the white powder  
Added to some dish  
And the watch would be slipped from my wrist  
And buried.  
Buried with rite and incantation.  
Once again the snake eyes  
Would seek the sky.  
This time in thankfulness  
For casting out one who knew.  
One who knew the snake dance;  
One who knew the hell-curse;  
One who knew the hiding-place  
Of the white powder.  
One who knew the handstroke  
Hell-guided at midnight,  
Three times across the chest  
And once downward.  
I wear the watch and I smile  
She thinks she has charmed me —  
Soon I shall leave, my work  
Is nearly completed —  
I must wear the watch

When I leave,  
And always hereafter;  
Then she can control me,  
No matter the distance.

The watch burns my wrist —  
Its metal is eating into my flesh.  
Its hands are the fangs of a snake,  
Black, slender and deadly.  
Its numbers are disease-thrown spots  
On a white surface.

After I leave I shall bury it  
Near some forgotten swamp  
At midnight.

The pulse in the wrist of Pleasure  
That cadenced its lively beat  
Is silenced:—now in the quiet  
The soul and the senses meet.

## AWAKENED

I stood in the outer space  
Just beyond the threshold.  
The sun held back the light, —  
Only the moon shone mistily.  
There, to the lament of chaos,  
I added my tears.

A song reached me from beyond,  
With echoes of sweet offering.  
A breeze wafted the kiss  
Of the sun-warmed  
Swaying wind-flowers.

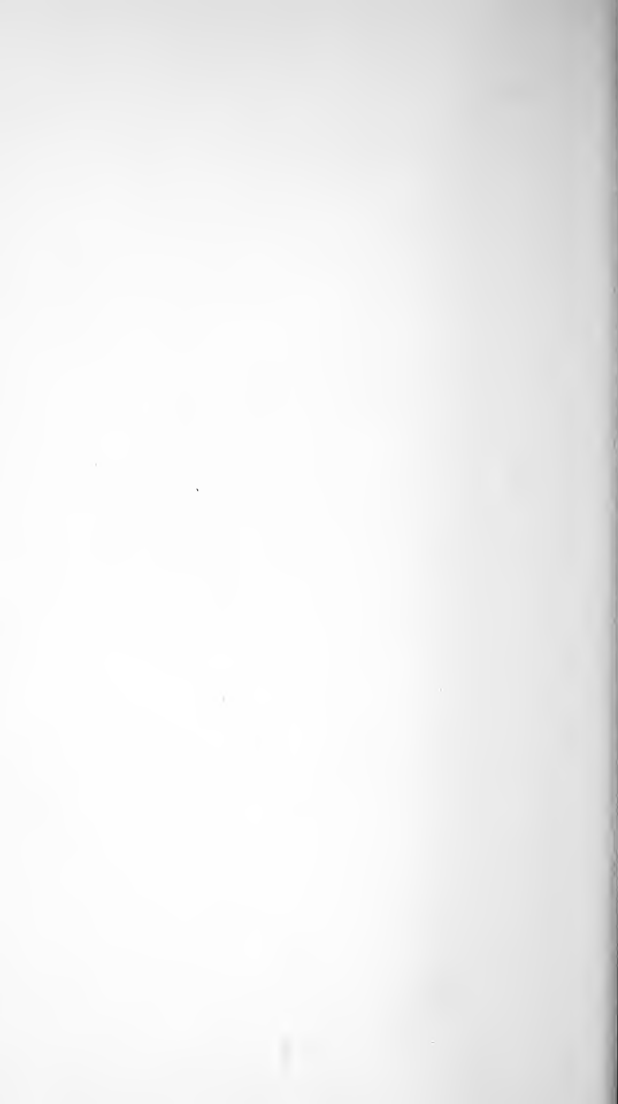
I reached my hands  
To release, and music, and sunshine.  
One step to the threshold — and over —  
To life, to hope and to freedom!  
But the sun held back the light,  
And only the moon shone  
Mistily.

Love, the light is falling around me  
That dawn paints  
On the face of the Ocean.  
The step to the threshold is lighted,  
The step to the threshold — and over —

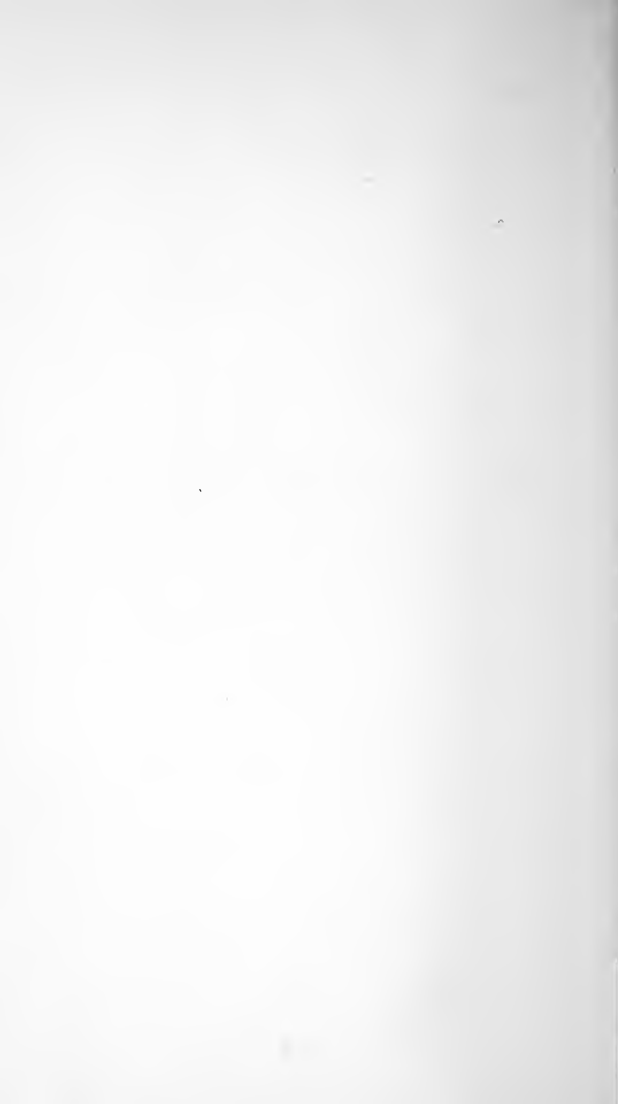


Where the sun-warmed  
Swaying wind-flowers  
Nod to the voice of the River.

Love, I awake, I awake;  
And to life, to hope, and to freedom  
I add the birth of my laughter.



## SKETCHES



## SKETCHES

### I

Old earth reels and sways  
And wheels and whirls  
To the mirth-mad time:  
For in the nether spaces  
The blue flame roars and hisses  
The music of the dance.

## II

The moon's gold has changed  
To palest silver,  
A stretch of smoky amber  
Flings itself  
Along the east.  
Fresh morning breeze  
Hurries from the hills  
To strip the night garment  
From the drowsy sea.  
The trees have turned their heads  
To watch the sun get up.  
The amber stretch  
Is now a field of gold  
Grown over  
With great fleecy flowers.  
The waves have put white ruffles on  
And dance along the beach.

## III

The snow and rain  
Caress and soothe,  
But the wind  
Saddens, —  
It is the deep rumbling  
Earth-echo  
Of all the gods' despair.

## IV

Dear little pool  
Left when the rain retired;  
How gently the old apple tree  
Showers on you scented snow;  
You are so small, and yet,  
You hold the moon and stars.



## V

See the landscape  
Done in crystal!  
Nature holds  
A palette strewn  
With diamond dust  
While she paints  
Fairyland.

## VI

Sweet white rose sprinkled with the dew,  
How well you play your part!

For who would dream on seeing you  
That canker eats your heart?

## VII

How lovely these trees are  
At all times.  
In the Winter  
When they stretch their nude arms to  
    Heaven  
Like daring wantons,  
And beg the frost-king for his crystal jewels.  
In the Spring,  
Clothed in the first green dress  
So faintly perfumed  
And trimmed with buds.  
Later when the Summer guests arrive  
And all is music and merry-making,  
How lovely then  
In their costume of firmer texture  
And deeper dye.  
But in the Fall,  
Arrayed in red and gold  
And spangled with ripened fruit  
Like giant rubies,  
'Tis then that Heaven  
Throws between Itself and them,  
That smoky, hazy Autumn veil  
Lest their beauty be too dazzling.

## VIII

Beneath the low, dark clouds  
The sea is angry.  
It roars in frenzy;  
Raging billows  
Lash the defenseless beach.  
Not a sail is seen.  
None could live.  
Far out  
One rock stands firm  
Amidst the tumult.  
It looks Heavenward  
And awaits the later victory —  
The reward of calm.

## IX

How beautifully this field  
Wears these daisies!  
Nature's lovely selection  
For a brown and green costume.  
The birds and butterflies  
Pause here  
Lost in admiration,  
While the gentle south wind  
Plays with the white and gold  
Bouquet.

## X

Hear the rumble  
Of Heaven's drum!  
The wind has paused to listen.  
Winding down the valley  
The green cascade  
Of silent trees  
Awaits the battle.  
The snowy billows  
Of the distant mountain range  
Hurl themselves on a purple sea.

Nearer sounds the drum.  
The apprehensive wind  
Begins to grieve,  
The green cascade  
Sways and groans.  
The coming torch  
Flashes at intervals  
Against the inky blackness.  
The drum sounds nearer, nearer —  
Hear its dreaded challenge  
So faintly answered  
By the frightened hills!  
How puny seems Earth's wrath  
When Heaven is angry!

## XI

A dense, dark pall drapes the Autumn sky  
In premature mourning;  
Below on Earth's charred altar  
Piny incense is placed  
As a last sad rite  
By the passing forest.

## XII

What pictures!  
Giant birds  
With wings of  
Burnished copper,  
Smiling women  
Waving filmy veils,  
Ruined castles,  
Dense forests,  
Snow-clothed mountains,  
Oceans of indigo  
And deepest green.  
All seen through the rain  
Of golden sun-beams  
This evening.



## XIII

Twilight trails her purple veil  
Across the valley city.  
From behind a distant mountain  
The sun waves a last  
Good-night.  
The gentle sighing whispers  
Of pines' far-reaching heads  
Meet and mingle  
With voices of the undergrowth.  
The sky has donned her evening dress,  
And fastens on her jewels  
One by one.  
From somewhere in the forest's heart  
A lone night bird  
Speeds departing day.

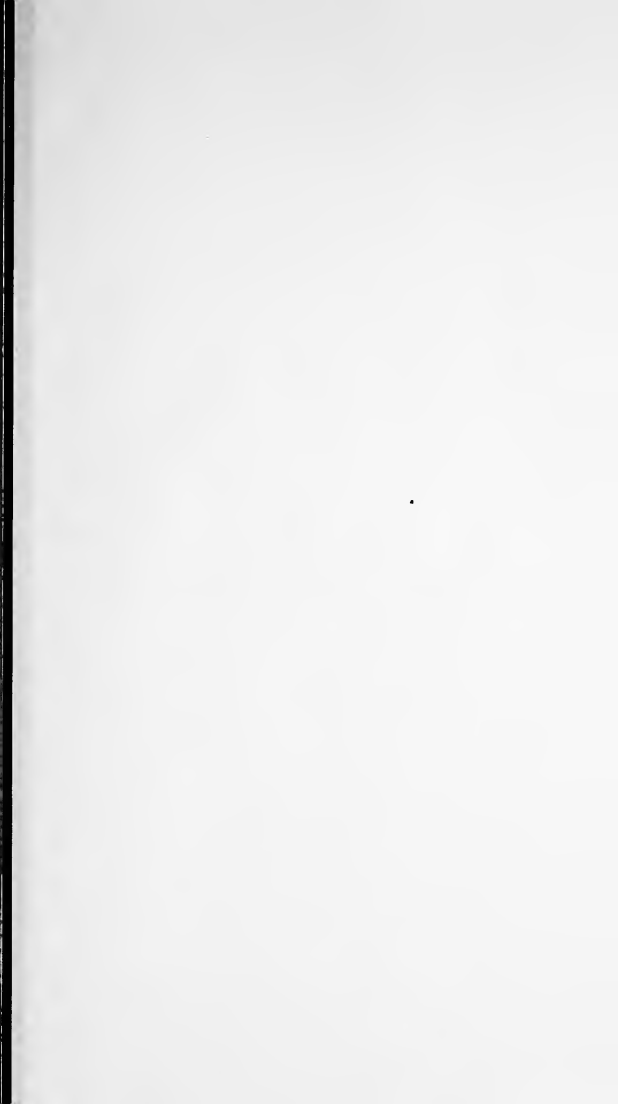
## XIV

O crystal-studded winter night,  
Thou'st tranced my mind in vague delight.  
I wonder if all things as rare,  
As marvelously bright and fair,  
Would prove on near approach to be  
As hard and cold and chaste as thee!

## XV

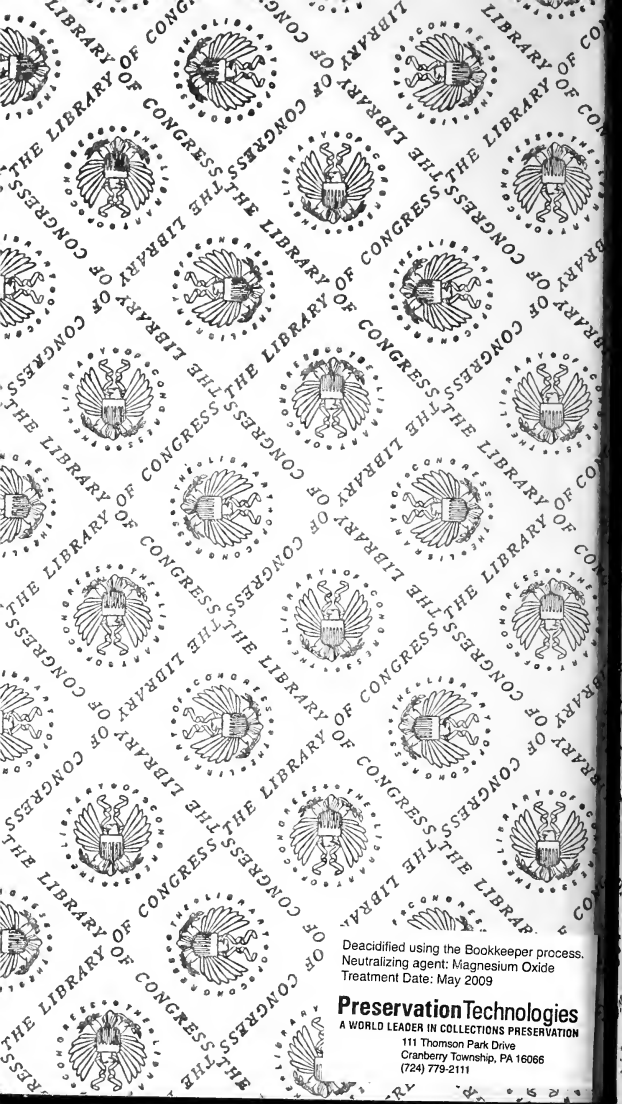
Thou brazen, glittering wanton of the world,  
Flinging at length thy nude sensuous body  
Under the full white staring gaze of the sun,—  
    Thy Paramour;  
Thou disdainest the green garment of grass or  
    plant,  
Thou refusest to drink of the cool singing streams,  
Thou parched, defiant, mysterious, beauty,—  
    Sahara!











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